

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

INFORMATION REPORT

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COUNTRY USSR (Belorussian SSR)

REPORT NO.

SUBJECT Belynichi Area - Rivers, Roads, and Bridges

DATE DISTR.

13 July 1953

NO. OF PAGES

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REQUIREMENT NO.

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REFERENCES

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1. Belynichi [N 53-59, E 29-44] is located in a gently rolling country. A wooded area, which is mostly coniferous, begins about three kilometers southeast of the town and another one about six kilometers north of the town. Near Belynichi are marshy areas, which freeze enough in the winter to support a man's weight, but not enough to support the weight of an automobile. The first heavy snow usually fell in November and stayed on the ground until it began to thaw in March. From November until about the middle of May, all roads, with the exception of the Minsk-Mogilev road [see below] which was kept open in the winter, were impassable. We usually had the first light frost in September and the first heavy one in November.
2. The Drut' River, which flows past Belynichi, is 30 to 40 m. wide at that point and up to 50 m. wide in other places. Being a fast-flowing river and fairly deep, the Drut' is not fordable. A few portions of the Drut' River freeze over during the winter but hardly enough to support a man's weight. Towards the end of March, or in the first part of April, the Drut' overflows in a number of places, for a period of one to two weeks, inundating areas up to one kilometer distant from its banks. Another river in the area is the Vabich, which is slow-flowing, from 10 to 25 m. wide, quite shallow, and fordable by truck. Most of the Vabich is frozen over in the winter but not enough to support the weight of an automobile. In the spring it, too, overflows in spots and covers areas up to a kilometer away. There are numerous other streams, six to eight meters in width, which flow through the swamps; but the Drut' and the Vabich are the main rivers in the Belynichi area.

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3. The only good road in the Belynichi area is the one from Minsk ~~/N53-50, E27-35/~~ to Mogilev ~~/N53-54, E30-21/~~, which is about six meters wide. I traveled as far east on this road as Berezino ~~/N53-50 E28-59/~~, but practically all my trips were from Belynichi to Mogilev. From Berezino to Mogilev this road was covered with hard-packed gravel; it had only occasional short stretches of cobblestone. It was paved with asphalt on the western outskirts of Mogilev; I also heard that the Germans had laid an asphalt road somewhere east of Mogilev. Repair work on this road was minimal and consisted of spreading it with gravel and then rolling. All the other roads in the Belynichi area were dirt roads which were virtually impassable during the winter and during rainy weather. They were deeply rutted and winding, and no attempt was ever made to improve them. During their occupation of the area, the Germans used four country roads (but only during the summer) in traveling from Belynichi to Mogilev; however, I cannot locate them. I neither saw nor heard of any contemplated road construction. Between Belynichi and Mogilev there were seven or eight wooden bridges, all capable of supporting an estimated 30 tons. In 1948, a bridge was constructed across the Drut' River at Belynichi. It was two-laned and about 30 m. long, and I saw a tank larger than the T-34 cross it without difficulty. The only other bridges I know of were one across a bog at Svetilovichi, about 10 km. east of Belynichi, and another across the Vabich River at Nezhkov, about 17 km. east of Belynichi. These bridges were shorter and less sturdy than the one at Belynichi.

1. Comment. Presumably the road between Berezino and Mogilev, not that to the east of Mogilev.

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